KIRAT MUNDHUM:

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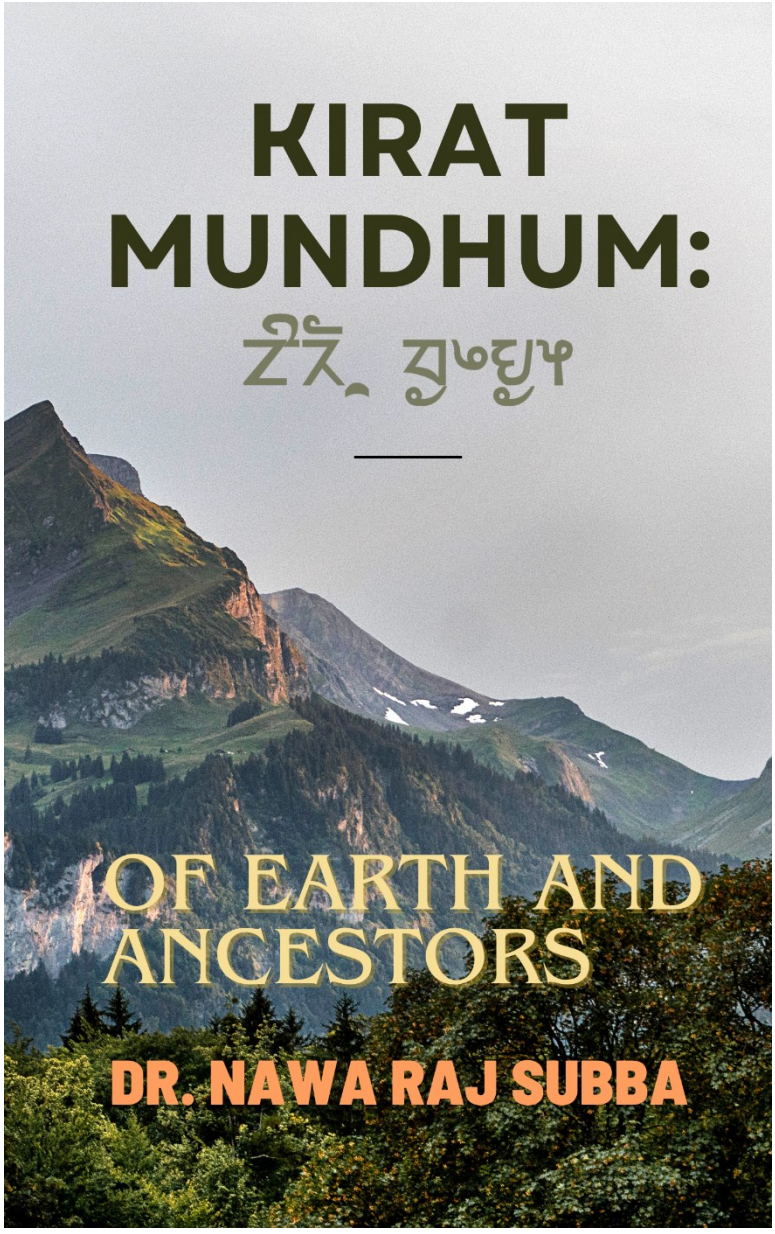

Kirat Mundhum:
Of Earth and Ancestors

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Dr. Nawa Raj Subba

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Implimenting Ideas...

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Kirat Mundhum: Of Earth and Ancestors

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Preface

The main purpose of writing this book is to review Kirat religion, philosophy, and tradition in an academic manner. The Kirat community's original religious traditions, philosophy of life, and cultural values are being forgotten by today's generation. In such a situation, it is necessary to document the oral history of the past, old beliefs, and traditional knowledge.

Kirat religion has generally been described as "nature-worshipping" or a "tribal religious system." However, this book aims to help revisit and understand Kirat religion from a philosophical, social, and philosophical point of view.

This research covers the following objectives:

- Identification and interpretation of the fundamental elements of Kirat religion.

- Study of rituals, customs, and social structures built on the basis of religion.

- The status of Kirat religion in modern times and the challenges of its preservation.

Scope and extent of research—

The focus of this book's research is Kirat religion, philosophy, and tradition, which are prevalent in Nepal and the eastern region of India (especially the Limbu, Rai, Sunuwar, Yakkha, etc. communities).

The scope of the research focuses on the following main areas:

- The original religious beliefs and philosophies of the Kirats.

- Analysis of oral and written sources on Kirat religion.

- Religious rituals, rites, and social practices.

- Relation of Kirat religion to contemporary times.

However, there are some limitations to the research:

- Much of the knowledge related to Kirat religion is based on oral tradition, whose written evidence is limited.

- There are differences in religious practices among different Kirat tribes, which can challenge the conclusion of uniformity.

- Modern influences have led to the disappearance or change of some traditions, making it difficult to understand the original form.

Writer's Note

Nepal is a country full of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity. In such diversity, the Kirat community has its own distinct religious beliefs, life outlook, and cultural heritage. Kirat religion is not just faith; it is a deep social, cultural, and spiritual structure associated with the entire way of life of the community. However, since the original form of Kirat religion is based on oral tradition, it has been a challenging topic to study in depth.

In that context, the purpose of this book is to clearly highlight Kirat religion and its cultural practices through research. Descriptive and explanatory approaches, not statistical ones, are more relevant to understanding topics based on such original and oral traditions. Therefore, qualitative research methods are preferred in this study.

Major methods of research

1. Interviews.

In the first phase of the research, religious leaders such as Phedangba/ma, Samba, and Nakchong, who had been involved in Kirat religion for a long time, were talked about. Efforts were also made to incorporate the experiences and memories of senior members of the community, which helped highlight many aspects of the Kirat religion.

2. Fieldwork.

I visited Kirat-dominated districts of eastern Nepal, such as Taplejung, Dhankuta, Sankhuwasabha, Ilam, and Khotang. I had the opportunity to sit in the villages and settlements and take a closer look at the life, religious activities, and original practices there. The time spent in such an area brought the research to life.

3. Textual Analysis.

Texts of historical and cultural importance related to Kirat religion—such as Munalung, Sumnima-Paruhang, and Mundhum—were studied. These texts are not only descriptions of religious methods; they are also a reflection of the lifestyle, philosophy, and social structure of the Kirat community.

4. Compiling oral history.

The oral traditions of the Kirat people develop them into an exclusive culture. In that regard, the research was highly dependent on customary wisdom such as mythology, folklore, dance, and ritual. It casts an illumination on cultural traditions, communal memories, and religious views.

5. Source Base.

There are two types of sources that were used in the research:

Primary sources include live interviews, watching religious ceremonies, and telling and hearing stories.

Secondary sources include essays, research papers, and works by historians who write about the Kirat religion.

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Part 1: Kirat Civilization and Historical Background

1. Origin and Geography of Kirats

The Kirats are an ancient ethnic group living in the southern wing of the Himalayas, whose history is believed to date back thousands of years. Differing opinions are found regarding the origin of the Kirats, but most scholars associate the early settlement area of the Kirats with the Eastern Himalayan Region, i.e., present-day Eastern Nepal, Sikkim, Darjeeling, Bhutan, and Tibet (Chemjong, 1967, p. 12).

Historian Tanka Bahadur Subba describes the geography of the Kirats as a "Kirat country," which extended from Sunkoshi to the Teesta River (Subba, 1999, p. 31). In the Mahabharata, the land of Kirat is mentioned as "the inhabitants of the Himavat region" (Mahabharata, Sabha Parva, Ch. 24).

The Kirats were generally a people living in mountainous forests, hunter-gatherers, cultivators, and pastoralists. They regarded nature as divinity, which is directly related to his lifestyle and religious beliefs (Gaenszle, 2000, p. 47).

2. Ancient Kirat Dynasties

The Kirats have had a history as the oldest political ruling group in Nepal. Yalamber was the first king of the Kirat dynasty, whose name is also mentioned in the Mahabharata as the "Kirat King" (Mahabharata, Vana Parva, Ch. 37). According to historian Iman Singh

Chemjong, Yalambar started his own rule by conquering the Kathmandu Valley (Chemjong, 1967, p. 24).

The names of the 29 kings of the Kirat dynasty are mentioned in the genealogy, whose reign spanned about 1200 years. The last of those kings was Gasti, whose period after rule is considered to be the rise of the Lichchavi dynasty (Regmi, 1965, p. 67).

During the reign of the Kirat kings, city development, water management, farming systems, and original religious traditions seem to have expanded. In particular, Kirat-era influence can still be seen in the Patan, Bhaktapur, and Bouddhanath regions (Slusser, 1982, p. 103). His rule is believed to have laid the foundation for religious pluralism and cultural tolerance in Nepal.

3. The interrelationship of Kirat and Vedic civilization

According to various historians and archaeological interpretations, the Kirat civilization is believed to be older than the Vedic civilization (Regmi, 1967; Chemjong, 1967). Although Kirat and Vedic civilization developed in separate regions at the same time, there is cultural interaction between them. In Vedic literature, there is a view of Kirats as 'malechcha' (non-cultural/non-Aryan) (Fuchs, 1973, p. 145), but there seems to be some similarity between Kirat and Vedic tradition in terms of religious practice.

For example, the Kirats regarded the sun, moon, fire, water, and forest as deities. The worship of such

elements is also very important in Vedic religion (Mishra, 1985, p. 83). This suggests that the early Hindu and Kirat traditions may have originated from the same nature-worshipping trend.

In the “Kirat-Arjuna Dialogue” ("Kirat-Arjuna episode") of the Mahabharata, the reference to Lord Shiva appearing as Kirat and examining Arjuna is very famous (Mahabharata, Vana Parva, Ch. 39). This story also shows an attempt to incorporate Kirat religion into the Vedic tradition (Gaenszle, 2000, p. 129).

4. Historical records, folktales, and archaeological evidence

Oral traditions, written records, and archaeological evidence are important in the study of the Kirat civilization.

(a). Historical records:

The Licchavi-era copper plates mention the territories belonging to the Kirat community and the names and rituals of the castes (Vaidya, 1993, p. 57). In some records, 'Kiratas' is identified as an independent community living in the mountains.

(b). Folk tales:

The original stories of the Kirats, such as the Sumnima-Paruhang, Munalung, and Khoya-Lopa stories, are associated with religious philosophy. These stories have been passed down from generations through oral literature called 'Mundhum' (Limbu, 2021, p. 34). It has kept alive the religious, philosophical, and social thinking of the Kirats.

(c). Archaeological evidence:

Ancient brick, statues, and water management systems found in the Patan, Sankhu, Chobhar, and Bhaktapur areas in the Kathmandu Valley are consistent with Kirat-era craftsmanship and construction traditions (Slusser, 1982, p. 76). He confirms that the Kirat civilization is ancient, systematic, and culturally rich.

Part 2: The Philosophy and Belief System of Kirat Religion

1. The basic structure of Kirat religion

Kirat religion is the religious and philosophical structure of the primitive Himalayan civilization, which is based on the worship of nature, ancestors, and souls. This religion is found to be based on oral traditions, rituals, rhythmic descriptions (mundhums), and collective lifestyles rather than institutionalized idolatry in the Vedic or Buddhist-Hindu context (Chemjong, 1967, p. 15; Gaenszle, 2000, p. 52).

The basic structure of Kirat religion rests on three major grounds:

(i) Nature-centered philosophical perspectives.

In Kirat religion, natural elements like mountains, rivers, trees, the sky, the sun, the moon, etc. are considered to be life-giving forces. The operation and existence of the world are explained through these elements (Subba, 1999, p. 84).

(ii). Ancestor Worship and Spirit Vision.

In Kirat religion, 'Thumi-Satma,' i.e., the soul of the ancestor, is revered. They believe that the spirit of the ancestors can be a guide in today's life (Limbu, 2021, p. 41).

(iii) Transfer of knowledge through Mundhum.

There is no written text in Kirat religion; rather, details of knowledge, ethics, religious methods, and origins of creation are transmitted through mundhum (oral scripture) (Gaenszle, 2000, p. 61).

The structure of this religion is community—where worship, rituals, and social management are performed through priests ('Nakchhong,' 'Phedangba/Ma,' 'Sambas,' etc.) in the respective clans.

2. Concepts of nature worship, spirit, and ancestor worship

Nature worship is the focal point of Kirat religion. According to their religious beliefs, the entire universe is alive—and the center of this vitality lies in nature (Gaenszle, 2000, p. 54). The festivals, rituals, and religious activities of the Kirats are in harmony with nature and in harmony with the seasonal cycle.

For example:

The Sakela/Sakyeva festival deals with the cycle of rice planting and harvesting, which symbolizes the thanksgiving motion of earth and agricultural life (Subba, 1999, p. 92).

The soul (Aatma/Soul) is given utmost importance in Kirat religion. They believe that every object has a soul, and life depends on the purity and balance of the soul. The soul's journey after death and his peace require ritualistic action (Limbu, 2021, p. 37).

Ancestor worship is an essential part of Kirat religion. When worshiping a home or clan, ancient ancestors—grandfathers, fathers, and fathers—are first remembered. It is called Samjik Mundhum (Chemjong, 1967, p. 27). It fosters a sense of intimacy, gratitude, and social responsibility.

3. Deities like Yuma, Theba, Tangri, etc.

In Kirat religion, gods and goddesses are worshipped not in idols, but in emotional forms. These deities are associated with local nature, social structures, and mythical stories.

Yuma Sam

Yuma is the main mother goddess of the Kirat religion. 'Yuma' means 'grandmother.' Yuma is considered a symbol of creation, love, compassion, and protection. Yuma is worshipped with great respect, especially in the Yakthung community (Limbu, 2021, p. 43).

Theba Sammang

Theba Kirat is the main patriarch of religion. He is the manager of creation, the giver of knowledge, and a symbol of discipline. Yuma and Theba are worshipped as the mother-paternal pair of creation (Chemjong, 1967, p. 33).

Other deities are referred to as Deuta, Tangri, Nagen, Saken, and various others.

These deities are related to natural or social aspects such as mountains, water, vegetation, disease, and weather. Kirats believe that everywhere there are powerful spirits, who are worshipped to handle, balance, and avoid evil (Gaenszle, 2000, p. 87).

These deities are directly connected to daily life and remain active in the spirit of community. Kirat is a characteristic of religion, which does not require the construction of any permanent temple or statue.

4. The Life Cycle in Kirat Religion: Birth, Death, and Rebirth

In Kirat religion, life is regarded as a cycle—beginning with birth, transition from death, and rebirth.

Birth (Sam)

The birth of a newborn baby is considered the coming of the soul. The 'naming' ceremony is performed after birth, where Nakchong or Phedangba/ma is believed to determine the child's name and future by having a ritual dialogue with his soul (Subba, 1999, p. 109).

Death (Nokhor)

Death is considered not the end of life but the beginning of a new form. The soul of the deceased is guided by 'Sumnima' and sent to the ancestral land. Special rituals, 'Nokhor Puja' or 'Mundhum,' are recited after death in Kirats (Limbu, 2021, p. 48).

Reincarnation (Satma Rong)

In Kirat philosophy, it is believed that reincarnation will take place according to the deeds and desires of the soul. This process is the eternal cycle, from which the purpose of life is to achieve salvation or balance (Gaenszle, 2000, p. 97).

In the Kirat religion, the essence of living a pious life lies in maintaining a balance of karma, engaging in

self-purification, and receiving the blessings of the ancestors.

Part 3: Religious Texts, Mantras, and Rituals

1. Literature on Munalung, Sumnima-Paruhang

In Kirat religion, oral tradition occupies a special place instead of written religious texts, which are called ‘mundhum.’ Mundhum is a fundamental source of cultural, philosophical, and spiritual knowledge of the Kirat races (Chemjong, 1967, p. 19). Many myths prevalent in Kirat society, narratives related to gods and goddesses, philosophy of life, and ritual methods have been transferred through this literature.

Munalung

Munalung is a mythical character, which is taken in the Kirat language in the sense of "dwelling place of the Holy Spirit." It guides life's goals and spiritual practice as a symbol of pure soul. Munalung narratives are found especially in the Limbu community (Limbu, 2021, p. 52).

Sumnima-Paruhang

In Kirat creation literature, Sumnima and Paruhang symbolize the original male and female forces of the universe. Sumnima is the earth and mother power, while Paruhang is a symbol of sky, sun, and masculinity. Their relationship is the story of natural balance and creation construction, which gives a glimpse of a nature-centered life view (Subba, 1999,

p. 98). This narrative is the fundamental philosophy of faith of the Kirats, highlighting the value of gender balance, cooperation, and love.

2. Original Mantras and Prayers of Kirat Religion.

Mantras used in Kirat religion (blessings, calls, addresses, etc.) are independent of the influence of the Sanskrit language. These mantras exist orally in Kirat ethnic languages and are commonly used by religious leaders who recite Mundhum.

Mantras can generally be classified into three types:

(i). The Original Prayer of Creation (Samsok Mundhum):

Where there is a description of how creation originated, where the spirit came from, and how gods and goddesses structured the world (Gaenszle, 2000, p. 65).

(ii). Ritualistic mantras:

Mantras are used in special festivals or pujas (e.g., Sakela, Nwagi, Kudang), which aim to seek blessings by invoking the gods and souls.

(iii). Tongsing Mundhum:

Mantras are used for purposes such as purifying the soul, removing ghosts, and removing the influence of inauspicious forces.

These mantras are based on a combination of words, rhythms, and emotions, and their effect is to

establish a 'balance between soul and nature' (Limbu, 2021, p. 57).

3. Role of Religious Leaders: Nakchong, Samba, and Phedang

There is no central religious institution or book-based priesthood in Kirat religion. Instead, community-established, tradition-based religious leaders guide society religiously.

Nakchhong

Nakchong is mainly a religious leader of the Rai community. They act as a means of reciting mundhum, conducting worship, and communicating with the soul and ancestor (Subba, 1999, p. 122).

Samba

The Sambas play the role of singer-sage in Kirat society. They present Mundhum in a rhythmic and musical style. Sambas are highly respected social positions and are considered heirs to knowledge preservation (Gaenszle, 2000, p. 77).

Phedang

Phedang Kirat is the main religious leader of the Limbus. They can also be women, and they do things like worship, disease prevention, and prediction in society. He is believed to give religious instruction through internal vision (Limbu, 2021, p. 61).

These religious leaders are qualified not by writing but by experience, vision, and traditional training.

4. Worship, sacrifices, festivals, and rituals

The religious practices of the Kirat religion are highly practical, nature-centered, and collective participation-based.

Pooja (Sewa)

Worship performed at a particular place (e.g., hills, trees, streams) is a show of gratitude to nature deities. Rice, alcohol, meat, fruits, etc. are offered to it (Chemjong, 1967, p. 45).

Sacrifice (Tho)

Sacrifice is a sacred tradition in Kirat religion—certainly in harmony and as a return to nature. Chickens, baby goats (kids), etc., are sacrificed on special occasions, and their meat is used in mass feasts (Subba, 1999, p. 111).

Festivals:

- *Sakela/Sakyeva*: A festival celebrated in spring and autumn, a festival of gratitude to Mother Earth and crops.

- *Nwagi/Nangi:* The festival of offering new grains.

- *Chasok Tangnam:* The main seasonal festival of the Limbus.

These festivals include collective dances ('sakela nach, yalang'), songs, pujas, and feasts.

Rites:

In Kirat religion, all major life events of birth, naming, fasting, marriage, and death are performed ritually. In these rituals, the relationship with spirit, ancestor, and nature is strengthened.

In this chapter, one has learned the basic elements of Kirat religious text and tradition, where it has been discussed how oral narrative, rituals, and religious leadership through a community are important considerations of Kirat tradition. We can gain a sense of a strongly held spiritual worldview of nature, harmony, and a sense of gender balance through such myths as Munalung and the tale of the Sumnima-Paruhang.

Cultural identity and spiritual continuity of the Kirat people find their sustenance in the original mantras and prayers and the practice of icons such as Nakchong, Samba, and Phedang. All this can be evidenced in their sacrifices, rites, and festivals, which are a living tradition that thrives as a shared memory, functional rituals, and natural religious beliefs. All these add up to a lush mosaic that has become an ongoing influence on the Kirat religious and cultural attitudes.

Part 4: Kirat Culture, Language, and Folk Tradition

1. Kirati languages and their religious significance

The languages used in the Kirat community are collectively called Kirati languages. These languages belong to the Sino-Tibetan family or Tibeto-Burman language family and are spoken in the eastern region of Nepal, especially in the Limbu, Rai, Sunuwar, and Yakkha communities (Van Driem, 2001, p. 47).

These languages are not the only means of communication—they are also a repository of the religious methods, original knowledge, and rites of the Kirat religion.

- Oral scriptures, such as Mundhum, are in Kirats. Any religious ritual (e.g., worship, sacrifice, disease prevention) is considered effective only by proper pronunciation and rhythmic mantras (Gaenszle, 2000, p. 58).

- Naming, marriage, words used in death rituals, spirit addresses, calls to gods and ancestors, etc., are used in Kirat language—it is believed that translation into other languages can lead to misinterpretation of meanings (Subba, 1999, p. 77).

Language is not merely a means of communication but a messenger of religion—Kirati languages are essential to keep alive the oral tradition of Kirat religion. But in today's time these languages are in

danger of extinction, which is not only linguistic but also leads to a crisis of religious identity (Limbu, 2021, p. 68).

2. Folklore, Dance, and Oral Literature

In Kirat society, the tradition of oral literature is stronger than written literature. Lifestyle, religion, social values, history, and old stories have been passed on for generations through songs, dances, and oral narrations.

Folk song

Kirat folk songs (such as yuma song, nangwa song, yale mang song, etc.) cover key moments of life—birth, harvesting, war, love, and death. These songs are musical worship—a means of communication with gods and ancestors (Subba, 1999, p. 105).

Dance

- *Sakela Dance*: A group dance performed during the Sakela festival in the Rai community, which embodies creation and agricultural life.

- *Chasok Tangnam Dance*: A ritual dance seen in the Limbu community, expressing gratitude after bringing in a new crop.

Dance takes the form of social unity and cultural self-esteem by incorporating dress, hand-foot movement, rhythmic dialogue, etc. (Gaenszle, 2000, p. 93).

Oral Literature (Mundhum)

The mundhum, mythology, and storytelling sung by the Sambas is a living book of religion, philosophy, history, and philosophy. This literature is not only a

religious ritual but also a collective memory (Limbu, 2021, p. 73).

3. Social structure and ethnic identity

There is a strong emphasis on family, community, and individualism throughout Kirat society. Subba notes that the Kirat people have historically avoided religious stratification, feudal class differences, and caste structures. The primary ethnic groups within the Kirat community are as follows (Subba, 1999, p. 61).

Major Kirat ethnic groups:

- Rai (Khambu)

- Limbu (Yakthung)

- Sunuwar (Koinch)

- Yakkha

These groups carry different identities, including their own language, religious leaders, rites, and rituals, but are linked by the original Kirat religion and Mundhumian tradition (Chemjong, 1967, p. 33).

Recognition of social values

- *Equality and Participation:* Recognizing the Collective Presence of All in Worship.

- *Ancestor Honor*: The Method of Patriarchy.

- *Women's participation*: Women's participation in roles such as Phedangba/ma and Samba is possible.

Ethnic identity in Kirats is linked to religion, culture, and language—preserving all three aspects is a condition of social existence (Limbu, 2021, p. 64).

4. Nature, Forest-Forest, and Environmental Perspectives

Nature is at the core of Kirat religion. The environmental approach of Kirat religion, which accepts forests, mountains, rivers, the sky, and air as life-giving forces, is still useful in today's time.

Religion based on biological diversity

- The deities of the Kirats belong to specific places, such as "Hangma Chula," "Sindure Ban," "Nagen Khola," etc.

- When a plant, animal, or place is revered, its protection becomes a religious duty (Gaenszle, 2000, p. 88).

Fundamental vision of sustainable development

- The 'worship of crops' of the Sakela festival is considered to indicate agricultural network and environmental balance.

- According to Subba (1999), the animal is sent off with respect after a "dialogue seeking blessings" that changes violence into something spiritual (p. 97).

Kirat approach in the modern context

'Mother to the earth' is an important alternative way of thinking in a time of climate change, biological disaster, and spiritual emptiness.

Part 5. Kirat—an indigenous Lifeway

Philosophy of the Kirat Mundhum

This chapter discusses the divisions of the Kirat Mundhum and also details the philosophical, ritual, and socio-ecological elements of the same. We consider various aspects of the concept of “Tong Saam Tong Shim” (cosmic equilibrium), such as texts, anthropology, and performance. We can describe Kirat spirituality as not a passive cosmology but an active system of mutual responsibility.

Through primary Mundhum exegesis, ethnographic research, and comparative ritual theory, this paper demonstrates how Kirat traditions balance the environment and keep the society healthy by conducting the ritual labor. The findings contradict the static perspectives on the indigenous religions and demonstrate the practice of the Kirat as a dynamic and versatile means of maintaining peace between people, their ancestors, and the natural environment.

1. The Kirat Mundhum as a Way of Life

The Kirat religion, which has been passed down through the oral traditions of the Limbu, Rai, Yakkha, and Sunuwar peoples, gives us a unique look at the cosmology of the Himalayan indigenous people. Kirat's sacred oral literature, the Mundhum, is a myth and a guidebook, unlike canonical books. It dictates beliefs and behavior. This paper integrates two key Kirat spiritualities:

(i). The ontological framework of Tong Saam Tong Shim (equilibrium of being),

(ii). The ritual mechanisms that keep it going, especially through shamanic (Samba) mediation and the logic of gift exchange.

Both Chemjong (2003) and Gaenszle (2002) have discussed the fact that the Mundhum, i.e., the sacred books of the Kirat people, are similar to cosmologies of Daoist or Vedic tradition. These researchers, however, overlooked an essential issue that the Mundhum emphasizes, which is that work and striving action are required to maintain spiritual and social harmony.

We tap on the theory of gift by Mauss (1925) and the performative anthropology, which sees the social and cultural expression of practices, to provide you with a new perspective. Such an attitude to Kirat rituals and beliefs allows us not to perceive them only as symbols but rather as meaningful segments of their religious knowledge of harmony. It also demonstrates the usefulness of their conduct in maintaining moral and cosmic order in their worldview.

2. Tong Saam Tong Shim: Cosmic Balance as Kinetic Ritual

2.1. Mundhum's Ontology of Reciprocity

The Thungsap Mundhum (creation narrative) declares:

"Tong Saam Tong Shim mahengra, theba sammang tonghengra"

("Balance exists where ancestors and living exchange breath.")

This "breath" (hupna) means that life forces are constantly changing, but this stops when people don't do their ritual responsibilities. - Daoist yin-yang (an implicit, self-regulating balance), - Vedic ṛta (an order maintained by God),

Kirat balance needs people to work. The Peysap Mundhum (ritual text) lists specific contributions: Phungwa (grain) for small problems and Swaikwa (animal sacrifice) for big ones. These offerings are not seen as optional "interventions" but as obligations owing to spiritual ancestors (Oppitz, 2008).

2.2. Paying off debt through ritual

Mauss' (1925) gift theory explains how this works:

- Offerings, like Tongba beer and animals, are presents that make spirits give back with rain, health, or fertility.

- If you break your promise (like by skipping the Yokwa ceremonies), you get cosmic "default," which shows itself as droughts or fights (Shneiderman, 2015).

A Case Study: After a landslide, the Theba Sammang Yokwa ceremonies in Limbu communities include a blood sacrifice to "pay back" the soil spirits (Nagini) for the disrupted land.

2.3. Clan work to replant trees, which brings things back into equilibrium.

This combined ritual-ecological action is a good example of Tong Saam Tong Shim as performative maintenance (Gaenszle, 2002).

3. The Samba: Ritual Technician of Equilibrium

3.1. Mediation as Genealogical Labor

The Samba (shaman) is more of a keeper of mutual agreements than a "mystic." Their jobs include saying clan lineages (Thar) during Yuma Yokwa to bring back old family agreements.

- Using Mundhum's Peysap lyrics to tell people exactly what to offer (for example, "a black goat to calm the landslide").

This fits with Hertz's (1907) idea that funeral rituals restore social order, but it also adds an ecological aspect, like the Samba-led *Bhumi Puja* (worship of land) before cultivation (Subba, 1999).

3.2. Compare to Universal Shamanism

Eliade's book does not show Samba's practice properly, as he has made meditation (samadhi) the main subject. But the focus of Samba practice is not meditation but the correct way of ritual—especially the correct recitation of 'Mundhum.'

The French theologian Mircea Eliade studied the shaman tradition in his book Techniques of Ecstasy (1951). He described "shamanism" as a practice often focused on meditation, trance, or burial. But in the case of Kirat/Limbu Samba, it is incomplete. Samba's main function is not to meditate but to recite the Mundhum (holy oral text) with the right pronunciation—which is done in a very assured and structured ritual language. So the interpretation of Eliade does not apply here.

- Samba is not just a person communicating with the spirit or the world of spirit. He himself is a historian who preserves the story and knowledge of his clan, society, and tradition.

According to the Western view, "shaman" or "medium" often refers to a person who communicates only with spirits, demons, or invisible forces. But Samba plays a much wider role than that. According to Oppitz (2008), Samba is not the only spiritual messenger; he is a cultural and historical record. He lives and shares the history, origins, moral teachings, and philosophy of life of his nation through Mundhum.

Looking at Samba practice only from the perspective of general "shamanism" leaves out its deeper religious, cultural, linguistic, and historical aspects. Samba is neither a person who lives in a meditation nor only a person who speaks to the soul. It is a living reading tradition that carries the knowledge, tradition, and history of his community.

4. Modern Implications: From Ritual to Resistance

4.1. Environmental Practice

The Mundhum's request for *Swaikwa* after cutting down trees is similar to how people pay for ecological services today. Kirat activists now use Bhumi Puja to protest mining, saying that nature is a sacred duty (Shneiderman, 2015).

4.2. Revivalism and Problems

Nepal became quite democratic after 1990, which brought great changes in maintaining and practicing indigenous traditions. Among the other aspects that became obvious, a certain documentary capture of oral texts representing the Mundhum tradition was noted (Hangen, 2010). It gave a boost to preserving these oral works of literature and being able to use them in the future.

Meanwhile, the Sakela dances have also been commercialized to cater to the needs of tourists, which created doubts that such performances might accompany a diminution of their ritual meaning (Picard & Robinson, 2006). Such changes notwithstanding, the fundamental concept that Tong Saam Tong Shim is an obligatory exchange is not removed, even though land rights movements cause changes in land use and property.

On the whole, all these reflect how these age-old traditions are taking different turns within the socio-

cultural setting of Nepal as it gives way to modern contagions.

5. Discussion and conclusion:

Kirat Religion as being a Two-Way Framework

The Kirat Mundhum defines a new meaning for cosmic balance, that is, active reciprocity, a term that implies people have to work towards achieving balance. This is a dilemma:

Western ideas often view nature and culture as separate things. However, Kirat rituals like replanting show that they can be both spiritual and environmental at the same time.

Balance isn't something you automatically have—it's something you have to work for.

Briefly, this chapter has indicated that Kirat spirituality is not purely a matter of belief; it is, as well, a matter of behavior. According to the Mundhum, the balance in the universe, which is called Tong Saam Tong Shim, is not automatic. People have to labor to keep it that way by doing rituals, making offerings, and taking care of nature.

Why It Matters:

The Kirat approach goes against what most people think about religion and environment. Kirat spirituality states that the sacred is all around us and that we need to actively care for it. This is different from other religions that perceive the divine as far away.

Future studies could look at how younger people keep these practices alive in cities or other nations. They should look into the roles of men and women in rituals and how Mundhum spreads among people who have moved away from their home country.

Part 6: Contemporary Perspectives and Challenges

1. Modern Kirat Religion: Revival or Transformation?

Today is the era of both new thinking and struggle for the Kirat religion. The fundamental values of the past are struggling with today's social, educational, and technological era. Somewhere this religion is in the renaissance stage, and in some places it is struggling to save its existence.

Signs of revival:

- Festivals such as Sakela, Chasok, and Nwagi are being celebrated at the city level, reviving religious consciousness.

- Young people have started studying mundhum, Kirat song, and language (Limbu, 2021, p. 93).

- Institutions such as Kirat Yakthung Chumlung and Kirat Rai Yayokkha are involved in the revival of religion and culture (Chemjong, 1967, p. 61).

Transformation pressures:

- In religious practices, demonstrativeness is more visible—more focused on the outward form than on the introversion (Subba, 1999, p. 133).

- Ritualistic methods may not be practical for the Kirat community living in the city, which is simplifying traditional practices.

In such a context, the challenge arises to accommodate modern transformation while preserving the spiritual essence of Kirat religion.

2. Politicisation of religion and identity politics

The main purpose of Kirat religion is a nature-based lifestyle, coexistence, and spiritual relationships. But in the contemporary context, religion is being used as a tool of political identity.

Forms of politicization:

- Ethnic political parties or activists bring Kirat religion into the political debate; its identity aspect seems to be more connected than its religious aspect (Subba, 1999, p. 101).

- Nepal's constitution and the fight to recognize "Kirat Dharma" as a separate religion in the census demonstrate the intricate link between religion and politics.

Kirat Religion in Identity Politics:

-'Who are we?' In reaction to this question, religion and culture have become the primary weapons.

- Identity-based movements have made Mundhumian tradition, Kirat language, and religious behavior a cultural force (Gaenszle, 2000, p. 116).

But the danger in the process is that the deep philosophy of religion may be lost, and Kirat religion may be limited to an ethnic slogan or festive activity.

3. Education, technology, and the impact of Kirat religion on the younger generation

Today's youth is a technology-driven, world-connected, but identity-seeking generation. In such an environment, the values and traditions of Kirat religion need to be presented differently to them.

The presence of religion in education:

- Although Kirat religion, language, and culture are partly included in the school curriculum, there is no deep learning.

- Kirat-related topics are only available as alternative subjects, which are weak due to effective publicity and teacher shortages (Limbu, 2021, p. 101).

New possibilities in technology:

- Mundhum, Kirat Dance, and festivals are being presented through platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok.

- Efforts are being made to reach out to the new generation through Kirat apps, online radio, and e-books.

Impact on young people:

- Some young people understand that "religion is not a serious thing; it is just a festival."

- On the other hand, however, there is a growing number of young people active in cultural renaissance—those who are seeking originality, learning the language, and re-practicing tradition (Gaenszle, 2000, p. 122).

4. Conservation Measures: Policy, Movement, and Prospects

The preservation of Kirat religion is not just the defense of tradition but the preservation of the overall biological, cultural, and spiritual heritage. This requires multi-pronged measures.

Policy Initiatives:

- Kirat religion is clearly recognized in the Constitution.
- Inclusion in the curriculum, where teaching about mundhum, language, and festivals is mandatory.
- Research support and religious leaders' registration and training programs.

Social Movements:

- Kirat youth groups have spread religious awareness through social media.
- Identity movements such as "Save Kirat Dharma" and "I am Yakthung, I am Khambu" are raising awareness.

Possibilities of conservation:

- Construction of a mass shrine (e.g., Paruhang-Sumnima place of worship).
- Cultural museums with Kirat chapters.
- Establishing an online Mundhum Library.

A successful model of conservation is not just structure building; it is meaningful engagement and restoration of internal faith. The successful journey of preserving the Kirat religion will depend on it.

5. On the worldview and contemporary relevance of Kirat religion

The philosophy of Kirat religion represents a unified way of life, where man, nature, and soul are absorbed in the same stream. Its worldview values not only the religious process but also a respectful interconnection between the human world as a whole. Its explanation is detailed below.

Interdisciplinary Totality: Human-Nature-Soul

In Kirat religion, the concept of 'nature worship,' self-ancestor worship, and life-death-rebirth binds these three accountable aspects to the sole whole. Nature worship is not just flower-fruit-plant worship; it is a consciousness-level exercise that assimilates human nature. In a world affected by modern-day ecological crises and climate change, this approach offers measures of regressive resistance. For example, the Kirat religion's 'tree worship,' 'forest-animal-family relationship,' etc. can be synchronized with current forest conservation, biodiversity, and local environmental management.

The concept of self-ancestor worship and the life cycle explains the connection between human existence and spirituality. The view of death as a transition process and the journey-arrival of the self, not the last, increases intimate trust, social harmony, and respect for life. It reduces the life-death duality and establishes a naturalistic, eco-evident religious vision.

Collective sacrifice and indigenous consciousness

Kirat religion involves worship, sacrifices, festivals, and rites collectively—led by religious leaders such as Nakchong, Samba, and Phedangba. It takes a culture of sharing responsibility, joy, sorrow, and intimacy in the community. In modern times, when family structures are weakening, such collective practice of Kirat can contribute to social cohesion. It reduces the distance between society and union and makes the local well-knownness and family relations happy in terms of time and time.

The mood of religion, politics, and identity

In the contemporary period, Kirat religion-identity has become the basis of politicization and national movement. But its worldview has the flexibility to keep the right and wrong aspects of using religion as a political tool in the wall. Its philosophy says that religion is a means of identity, not division. Kirat religion can promote the voice of indigenous people in the context of indigenous rights, land rights, language-culture teaching, and constitutional rights in India-Nepal. But this requires a responsible approach and tolerance from the religious-social leadership.

Youth and Technology: The Digital Ritual

In today's millions of youth and technology mediums, Kirat religion-philosophy has opened a new dimension. Digital fairs—festivals, bhaktipaths through mobile applications, yajna-puja videos on

YouTube, online libraries, and digital structures of texts—are all transforming the way religion is learned.

It highlights two important contemporary perspectives:

1. A means of keeping religion alive in old and new ways.
2. Universal access to universalizing ancient and traditional religions

The younger generation is now developing the ability to communicate with the universe through mobile. If Kirat religion wants to be present there, it requires creating commentary, media presentation, digital digitalization, and unorganized digital reading practices.

Alliance with global tribal-environmental movement

The world is grappling with trees, biodiversity, forestry, and tribal activities. Kirat dharma can add intimacy and awareness to such movements from its point of view. A global tribal network can be created between east-west indigenous communities, where the participation of Kirat religion can bring about a consistent approach to indigenous conservation. It can give alternative ground to self-identity and indigenous rights struggles in indigenous societies, as well as become a means of north-south tribal partnership and knowledge exchange.

Discussion summary

Kirat religion is moving forward by tightening its spiritual roots in today's world. Its philosophy-tradition has a profound potential to integrate not only religious practice but also the development of society, environment, and insight. In the contemporary context, where the eco-social-religious divide has widened, Kirat religion has shown a positive, active, and inclusive path.

Thus, the worldview of Kirat dharma is a "living discourse" that gains new energy even with the change of time-society-prodigy while retaining relevance in the religious-spiritual, environmental, and social context.

Part 7: A Critical Analysis of Kirat Religion and Sattehang Sect

1. Background

Limbu, Rai, Yakkha, Sunuwar, and other communities living in the eastern part of Nepal are called "Kirat" communities. Their original religious tradition is Mundhum—a complex cultural belief system based on nature worship, ancestor worship, and oral tradition (Gaenszle, 2000).

But of late, a new religious group called the Sattehang sect has come to the fore, which seeks to present Kirat religion in a unified and organized framework. This has created a conflict between traditional mundhum and modern interpretation.

In this article we:

- Let's look at the difference between the traditional form of Kirat religion and the Sattehang.

- We analyze the political, social, and economic reasons behind this change.

- Give a critical view by presenting the views of scholars.

- Let's discuss the future challenges of the Kirat community.

2. Form of traditional Kirat religion (Mundhum)

(a) Religious beliefs and practices

Nature Worship: Rivers, mountains, trees, the moon, and the sun are considered to be life-giving powers.

Ancestor worship: The paternal spirit is worshiped as "Mang."

Mundhum: A set of stories, songs, and rituals based on oral tradition.

Shamanism: Local gurus such as Phedangba/ma, Samba, and Yeba/Yuma perform rituals.

(b) Social structure

- Birth-based: Being a follower of the Kirat religion is a birthright identity; there is no practice of conversion.
- Decentralized: There is no single guru or institution of religion; separate rituals take place in the village.

(c) Historical evidence

- Evidence of nature worship and shamanism of the Kiratis is found in the records of the Lichchavi and Malla periods (Gaenszle, 2000, p. 19).
- According to Martin Gaenszle (2000):

"Mundhum is a living oral tradition that coordinates society, history, and nature. ”

3. The Sattehang Sect: New Interpretations and Controversies

(a) Causes of origin and expansion

Ethnic Politics: After the 1990s, the demand for identity and rights increased, and the Kirat religion sought to be reshaped (Hangen, 2010).

Impact of Hindutva: Felt the need to compete with the organized structure of Hinduism.

- Economic reasons: Institutional framework for donations, support, and international funding is needed.

(b) Comparison between traditional Mundhum and Sattehang

Element	**Mundhum**	**Sattehang Sect**
Base	Oral Tradition	Written "Sankhi" Kirat mundhum
Guru	Locally available Phedang/Yeba in the village	Centered on Guru Phalgunanda
Identity	Birth defect	Conversion open
Method of worship	Nature-Based	Hindu style (idols, mantras, pandits)

(c) Scholars' opinion.

Lack of historical uniformity: "Kirat religion is an invented concept because the religious traditions of Rai, Limbu, and Sunuwar are different. (Subba, 1999).

Effect of Hinduization: "The effect of Hinduization is clearly visible when you see Sanskrit mantras and idol worship in Sathehang. (Hangen, 2010).

(d) Politicization:

The Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) seeks to show Kiratis as part of the Hindu Rashtra. On the other hand, the Nepal Kirat Party (NKP) has made Sattehang a weapon of ethnic identity.

Both have used religion for political purposes (Hangen, 2010).

4. Deep analysis: differences and shared essences

(a) Level of variation

Layer	**Variation Examples**
Subethnic	Limbu of Panchthar vs Limbu of Jhapa (some variation in practice)
Geophysical	Tehrathum's Mundhum vs Darjeeling's Buddhist-influenced concern
Religious studies	Limbu Mundhum Vs Rai Mundhum

(b) Shared characteristics

- Nature Worship
- Ancestor Worship
- Shamanism
- Oral tradition

"As the difference is, the essence is the same." (Gaenszle, 2000, p. 21).

(c) Is Sattehang a separate religion?

As in Hinduism—where one worships Vishnu (Vaishnava), some Shiva (Shaiva), and some Devi (Shakta)—but all together they fall into "Hinduism."

Similarly, within Kirat religion, castes like Limbu, Rai, Sunuwar, and Yakkha have their own culture. Some use samba, some phedang, some celebrate interest, and some sake.

But everyone has the same base.
- Worship of Nature
- Respect for ancestors
- Oral Mundhum Tradition
- Role of shaman religious leaders

Therefore, the Sattehang sect is not a separate religion; it is a new style of Kirat religion. Since their base is the same, the Sattehang sect can be considered a different style of Kirat religion (Hangen, 2010). But it has also been criticized for adopting many Hindu and Buddhist styles.

Conclusion:

Sattehang's method may be different, but because the philosophy is the same, it can be considered a stream of Kirat religion—not a separate religion.

5. Scholarly Critical Perspectives and Conclusions

Scholar	Viewpoint	Conclusion
Martin Gaenszle	Mundhum is a "folk religion," not a modern religion.	Sattehang changed its appearance.
T.B. Subba	The religions of Limbu and Rai are different.	"Kirat Dharma" is a unified concept.
S. Hangen	Sathehang is a mixture of ethnic politics and Hinduization.	Distortion of traditional religious forms.

6. Future Challenges and Prospects

(a) Challenges

- Erosion of traditional knowledge

- Political use of religion

- Alienation of the younger generation

(b) Possibilities

- Documenting and preserving Mundhum.

- Giving alternative recognition to Sattehang, do not leave the tradition.

- Giving basic religious education to Kirati youth.

"Sattehang has played a role in the quest for identity, but it is important to balance tradition and politics."

7. Conclusion

Kirat Dharma refers to a common philosophy based on nature worship, ancestor worship, and oral tradition. But the practices and traditions are different in Limbu, Rai, Sunuwar, etc., communities.

The Sattehang sect tried to organize the Kirat religion, but it brought about a clash in traditional beliefs and practices. This complex relationship between religion, culture, and politics needs to be sensitively understood and used.

8. Recommendations

- To make fundamental education and documentation mandatory for the preservation of traditional Mundhum.

- Finding a way to coexist by establishing dialogue between Sattehang and traditional Mundhum.

- To determine the boundaries of political usage so that religion does not get distorted.

Just as—

"The mountains are different, but they are all the same glaciers. ”

– This is a simple metaphor to explain the Kirat tradition.

Chapter 8: Religion, Dharma and Mundhum: Classical Concepts and Realities

1. Introduction

The two concepts (dharma and religion) seem to be used interchangeably in comparative philosophy and religious studies. Nevertheless, these expressions derive variously in terms of etymology, history, and ideas.

Though the term "dharma" originated in the Indian subcontinent and carries with it an extensive cluster of meaningful elements, which encompass ethical, cosmological, and social denotations, the word "religion" is a Latin-based creation built through Western theological and imperial discourse.

This chapter looks at the historical and literary contrasts between the two paradigms and assesses their relevance to indigenous traditions, with more focus on Kirat populations of the eastern Himalayas.

2. Classical and Literary Distinctions: Dharma vs. Religion

The Sanskrit term "dharma" derives from the word "dhra," which means "to sustain" or "to uphold." According to the early Vedic texts (1500–1200 BCE and later), dharma was that of moral and cosmic order (hrta) that governs the universe (Doniger, 2009). In traditional documents of Sanskrit literature, such as

the Manusmriti and Mahabharata, dharma appears as a complex concept, which incorporates individual morality, social responsibility, and religious legislation. It is prescriptive and descriptive, being both informative to the individual conduct ("svadharma") and to the larger roles of the society "varnAsrama dharma" (Brockington, 1998).

On the other hand, the word "religion" is a Latin word (religare) that means "to bind" or (religio) "respect or accountability to the divine." Contemporary conceptions of religion as a belief system centering upon a supreme deity, sacred books, rituals, and institutional forms of organization developed in the European Enlightenment and the colonial extension (Asad, 1993). This reading has been a way to impose a context that is richly informed by Abrahamic traditions, namely Christianity, that thrives on dogmatic, orthodox, and exclusivist formulations.

Although ‘dharma’ and ‘religion’ seem to be the same, they have different meanings and usages. ‘Religion’ often refers to a belief system with a certain God, a system of worship, holy books, and rules. It serves to distinguish between who believes in sacred things and who doesn't, thereby drawing a kind of boundary between holy and normal (secular) life (Asad, 1993).

But ‘dharma’ is a way of life, which includes morality, responsibility to society, and relationship to the universe. ‘Dharma’ is not the name of a particular

religion but rather a way for individuals and societies to live in balance (Flood, 2011).

The Mundhum of the Kirat community falls outside the boundaries of both of them and is an independent, verbal, nature-worshipping, patriarchal knowledge system that needs to be understood in its context (Chemjong, 2003). There is no single God or religious institution in Mundhum. Rather, it values a balance with nature, ancestors, and spirit. Natural forces such as forests, streams, the sun, and the moon are worshiped in Kirat Sanskar. In this sense, Mundhum can be understood neither by the 'dharma' of Hinduism nor by Western religion. (Subba, 1992).

3. Chronology and Philosophical Antiquity

'Dharma' is several centuries older than the term 'religion.' The first mentions of 'Dharma' in the Vedic corpus date back to the second millennium BC. Invocations of 'ṛta,' a forerunner to 'Dharma,' manage natural cycles, ritual order, and societal harmony (Jamison & Brereton, 2014). The Upaniṣads, epics, and Dharmaśāstra literature further elaborated on the concept of 'Dharma.'

In contrast, the term religio' first appears in Latin texts around the first century BCE, but its contemporary interpretation—as an organized belief system—was not established until the post-Reformation and colonial centuries. Scholars such as Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1963) and Talal Asad (1993) have argued that the present concept of "religion" is historically limited to the Western intellectual heritage.

Mundhum is the fundamental knowledge system of the Kirat community, which has been prevalent verbally long before the institutional form of religion developed. It is a collection of musical, cultural, social, and natural knowledge, which is passed on from the old generation to the new generation through telling, songs, stories, and rites. Mundhum is not based on a single god or book, but rather a life philosophy based on the balance between human beings and nature.

According to various researchers, Mundhum has its origins linked to the Kirat civilization (about 4,000 years old), which existed long before Hindu or Abrahamic religions were institutionalized (Subba, 1999; Gaenszle, 2000). This shows that Mundhum is an older, independent, and original system of life philosophy and practice than 'dharma,' which places nature, ancestors, and social relations at the center.

4. The Kirat Worldview: Dharma and Religion Beyond?

Kirat groups that consist of the people of Rai, Limbu, Sunuwar, and Yakkha inhabit the eastern Himalaya in Nepal, Sikkim, and the northeastern region of India. They believe deeply in animism, ancestral worship, and a nature-oriented view of the world. Their culture is based on the so-called Mundhum, which is a compilation of oral histories, myths, and instructions of the rituals that have been handed down through the generations and have been preserved by the religious elite of the people, known as Sambas or Phedang (Gaenszle, 2000).

Kirat cosmology is fundamentally relational. It focuses on peace with nature, respect for ancestors, and ritual reciprocity with spiritual entities. There is no single creator god, sacred scripture, or ecclesiastical organization. Applying the term 'religion' to Kirat tradition risks misrepresenting its indigenous epistemology. It can force external paradigms that cannot take into consideration the dynamic, performative, and non-doctrinal nature of Kirat practice (Hardman, 2000).

In the same way, though the wider and more comprehensive definition of dharma—which is moral order or way of life—seems to be applicable, the classical Sanskritic denotations of the term, especially how it is expressed in Brahmanical literature, are not germane to Kirat philosophy. 'Dharma' in Hindu or Buddhist contexts involves varṇa hierarchies, soteriological goals such as 'moksha,' and ceremonial orthopraxy, which are not fundamental to Kirat traditions (Subba, 1992).

Therefore, Kirat worldview is not defined and confined in terms of the definitions of Dharma and religion. It pursues legitimacy in its own terms rather than the indigenous knowledge system possessing different cosmology, values, and rituals.

5. Conclusion

The ancient concept of 'Dharma' and the modern construct of 'religion' have quite different origins, scopes, and functions. While 'dharma' is a civilizational paradigm that includes ethics, duty, and cosmic order,

'religion' is a historical concept based on Western theological ideas. 'Dharma' is obviously older, dating back to the early Vedic period, whereas 'religion' appears much later as a tool of classification and government in the West.

Both ideas, when applied to indigenous traditions as described in the book, fall short of adequately capturing the philosophy, principles, scope, and practices of the Kirat people. The Kirat worldview is not consistent with either scriptural Dharma or institutionalized religion. Rather, it shows a living culture based on nature, oral tradition, and community ideals.

Any academic interest in these traditions should avoid the impulse to force them into typologies that were already defined but should observe the epistemic independence of the traditions.

Part 9: Epilogue

1. Major findings

This book offers an in-depth analysis of the multifaceted aspects of Kirat dharma, philosophy, and tradition. The early chapters of the study discussed the Kirat civilization and its historical background, where the origins, geography, ancient dynasties, and interrelationships of the Kirats with Vedic civilization are specifically highlighted through subtle studies. This passage shows that Kirat religion does not remain in the oral tradition only; historical records, archaeological evidence, and folklore have strengthened its cultural roots.

(a) Historical-cultural basis

Information about the origin and geography of the Kirats proves that the religion spread to the middle of the Himalayas and expanded over time. Excavations of the ancient Kirat dynasties show that they were not only politically empowered but also culturally and religiously advanced.

The fact that Kirat philosophy was known prior to Vedic times is extremely noteworthy. The Kirat-Vedic civilization developed an interdependence over time. As a result, the two civilizations exchanged knowledge, attitudes, and cultures to varying degrees. Coexistence here has diffused knowledge in both fields in an intriguing way. It demonstrates that Kirat dharma evolved independently, yet became interwoven with Vedic civilization.

(b) Fundamental structure and belief system

The second part of the book elaborates on the philosophy and belief system of Kirat dharma, explaining its original structure in detail. Nature worship, spirit worship, and ancestor worship have centralized religion in its central belief system. In Kirat philosophy, religion has been given a very holistic form based on the interrelationship between human nature and the soul. When comparing deities such as 'Yuma,' 'Theba,' and 'Tangri' with the global deity system, Kirat religion's uniqueness and proximity to ordinary geographical realities are evident.

The concept of the human life cycle ('birth-death-rebirth') is also a deeply studied aspect in Kirat religion. This book outlines it not only as a life-and-death cycle but also in relation to self-rebirth and karma. It has also put the human consciousness and nature consciousness in the destination, which also makes Kirat dharma relevant in the modern sense.

(c) Values that are set down by Kirat scripture and tradition

The third chapter gave an overview of the Kirat religious text and tradition, which involved issues that included the significance of oral narrative, ceremonies, and religious leadership at a community level. Such myths as the tale of Sumnima Paruhang and Munalung characterize an in-depth spiritual perception of the importance of harmony with nature and equal distribution of gender roles. The spiritual tradition and

cultural identity of the Kirat people are maintained to the sounds of the recorded ancient prayers and mantras and worship of religious symbols such as Nakchong, Samba, and Phedang. All this is depicted in their festivals, rituals, and offerings, which are used to supplement a rich culture that exists due to oral tradition, utility of events, and natural religious beliefs. It is a tapestry of all these pieces that has constructed the religious and cultural idea of the Kirat people.

(d) Cultural media—folk tradition

A four-part study on Kirat culture, language, and folk tradition shows that languages, folklore, folk dance, and oral literature establish this religion as an additional way of life. It is clear here that language is not only a means of communication but also a fundamental part of religious experience. This study proves that the interrelationship of religion, philosophy, and everyday life is evident in oral literature.

(e) The fifth part presents Important Points:

Equilibrium is two-way traffic.

People need spirits, as well as spirits needing people and ancestors.

Spirits must repay sacrifices by people in the form of favors, a good rain, or good health in the case of food or animals.

Rituals Are Deal-like.

Failure to perform rituals may lead to the occurrence of bad things such as drought or war.

The Samba (shaman) is essentially a middleman who makes sure both sides maintain their word.

There is a link between nature and culture.

Kirat traditions don't make a distinction between “dharma” or "religion" and "ecology."

Replanting trees after a ceremony is not only good for the environment, it's a religious requirement.

Old Knowledge, New Problems.

Even now, Kirat ceremonies vary to deal with problems like climate change and land rights.

But globalization might convert traditions into shows, which would take away their deeper value.

(f) Contemporary Challenges and Transformation

The sixth part provides an analysis of the possibilities of the revival or transformation of Kirat dharma in the context of modern times. This shows how religion is linked to politicization and identity politics—especially in ethno-political movements—and the role of Kirat dharma has acquired a new dimension.

But the risk is that the politicization of religious identity will spoil religion. In addition, studies of education, technology, and its impact on the younger generation show that technology-friendly lifestyles are changing the means of learning religion—records,

digital resources, the flow of religious beliefs on social media, etc., are beginning to reshape old traditions.

(g) Kirat dharma and Sattehang Sect

In the seventh part, we critically analyzed the Kirat Dharma and Sattehang Sect. Kirat Dharma refers to a common philosophy based on nature worship, ancestor worship, and oral tradition. But the practices and traditions are different in Limbu, Rai, Sunuwar, etc., communities.

The Sattehang sect tried to organize the Kirat religion, but it brought about a clash in traditional beliefs and practices. This complex relationship between religion, culture, and politics needs to be sensitively understood and used.

(h) Difference in religion, religion, and mundhum

'Dharma' and 'religion' are two different things. Religion is an ancient Indian thought in which duty, morality, and balance with nature are central. Religion, however, is a later concept in the West, often based on God, institutions, and laws.

Both of these ideas are incompatible with the Kirat tradition. The philosophy of life of the Kirats is based on a relationship with nature, ancestry, and community, not on any theology or institution.

Therefore, to understand the Kirat tradition, the criteria of external religion should not be used. It should respect its own freedom and originality.

2. Conclusion:

While Kirat mundhum is referred to as dharma and religion in many places, it is more fitting to comprehend it as mundhum. This book is an in-depth study of Kirat religion, philosophy, and tradition, covering aspects ranging from its historical background to modern transformation. Kirat Mundhum originated from the Himalayan region, and although it is interrelated with Vedic civilization, it seems to have developed on the original path. At the heart of mundhum are beliefs such as nature worship, spirit, and ancestor worship, which highlight the deep connection between man, spirit, and nature. The concepts of gods and goddesses, life cycles, and karma are embedded in the structure of this religion.

Oral traditions, myths, rituals, and religious leadership are indicative of Kirat religion, which also highlights aspects of social structure and gender equality. Language, folklore, song, and dance are deeply linked to religion, and they express religious feelings. According to the Kirat belief, there is a relationship between man and spirit, rituals are considered to be agreements, and there is no difference between nature and religion.

Kirat culture is also relevant to contemporary problems related to climate change and land. In the modern era, Kirat Mundhum is being transformed through technology, education, and social media, which has changed the understanding of religion among the new generation. Although the Sattehang

sect has tried to organize religion, it seems to have created some conflict with traditional practice.

The relationship between religion, culture, and politics needs to be sensitively understood because of the differences in traditions among the diverse Kirat communities. Overall, the book covers the historical depth, philosophical seriousness, and contemporary relevance of Kirat religion.

3. The Topics of Future Research in the Kirat Religion

Although quite a number of articles were written on Kirat dharma and its traditions, there is the necessity of more comprehensive, multidisciplinary, and prospective studies. The next areas are pointed out as outlooks:

1. Religion and territorial variety.

There is no homogeneity of the Kirat religion; various ethnic groups (Rai, Limbu, Sunuwar, Yakkha, etc.) have their own traditions. The Limbu believe in and practice Yuma-Theba worship, and the Munalung and SumnimaParuhang narrative stories are well known to the Rai. Ancestor worship is more important to the Sunuwar and the Yakkha cultures. With the help of such methods as regional mapping or literary analysis, comparative research will be able to contribute to the identification of patterns and differences, which, in turn, will lead to a thorough understanding of pan-Kirat religious identity.

2. Textual and Language Study

Religious sources such as important writings of Sumnima-Paruhang and Munalung provide valuable knowledge where linguistic and cultural growth of Kirats is concerned. These might be based on a Proto-Kirat or native Prakrit tongue. There is a possibility to interrelate Kirat scriptures with other ancient works, including the Rigveda or the Bible, and this can be done through linguistic and comparative research work, which shows a higher degree of similarity in terms of

religious and cultural aspects. Oral texts are translated, interpreted, and digitized and thus offer new directions to academic studies.

3. What is relevant in the modern world?

The worship of nature, the community rituals, and the spirit of ancestor worship that runs through the Kirat religion give us positive alternatives to the individualistic and consumeristic world that we live in today.

- Philosophy of Environment: The ecological crisis also highlighted the relevance of Kirat views of nature-human relations.

Spiritual Renaissance: Ancestor worship and any other practices may be interpreted in a new way to enforce spiritual awareness and mental well-being.

- Social Commitment: Rituals in the community foster unity, responsibility, and peace.

4. Identity, Youth, and Digital Religion.

Younger generations are forming their identity under the background of globalization, digitalization, and changes in values. It is needed to determine research on:

- Why young people are attracted to the Kirat religion, be it on a cultural basis in search of spiritual foundation or environmental morals.

- The way in which digital technologies like social media, online rituals, and virtual festivals are impacting religion education and practice.

- The effect of family and social reformations on the religious activities.

This study can help design strategies for maintaining religious traditions that can be applicable and powerful for future generations.

5. Interfaith and International Indigenous Awareness

Kirat religion can be very decisive in establishing spiritual diversity and indigenous philosophies in a multicultural world. Possible research and activity areas are

Interfaith Conferences: Hosting of venues of discussion between interfaith dialogues.

Comparative Philosophy: Overlaps with Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity are studied so as to promote understanding.

- Global Indigenous Movement: Identification and recognition of Kirat religious identity in the UN and/or the human rights discourses.

6. The Problems and Solutions

There are hazards in carrying out such research—long ago, lack of documentation, funding, instability of oral tradition, and contradiction of identity politics. In order to break these:

The cooperation between the government, universities, and the local people is necessary.

This field will be enhanced by digital archiving, global collaborations, and the independent researchers being supported.

To sum up, Kirat religion offers tremendous amounts of research opportunities not only as the cultural-religious system but also as the system of the ecological equilibrium, spiritual rejuvenation, and social welfare in modern times.

Appendix

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2. Transliteration of ancient mantras

A glimpse of some of the original mantras collected from Kirat Mundhum—as much as possible with transliteration in the original language and Nepali translation:

(a) Yuma Samman Mantra (Limbu language):

"Nawa lung phoktangma, Yuma samrikma, Tongsing Hemba mangsoma..."

Nepali Translation:

"New stones are installed, Yuma Devi is remembered, Tonsing Hemba is called..."

(b) Initial call for a festival of interest:

"Sewaro mangsewa, samlaphung sam yo..."

Nepali Translation:

"Sevaro (ancestors) are called, rituals are started by placing a sala dali..."

Note: Since the meaning of mantras is understood from the rites of a particular community, the Moondhum tradition, and the teachings of the religious leader, the translation is interpretive by context.

3. Glossary

A list with a brief meaning of the major Kirat terminology used throughout the book.

Word	**Meaning**
Mundhum	Kirat's oral scripture or philosophy of life
Yuma	Mother Goddess, Guardian Power
Phedang	religious leader or shaman
Nakchong	religious leader or shaman
Sakela	Main festival related to nature worship
Samlaphung	Place of worship (stone with special symbol) Serve revered ancestors.
Tangri	Kirat Devi Shakti, related to a particular place
Chumlung	Community or assembly
Chasok	Thanksgiving for new food

Author Background and Works

Dr. Nawa Raj Subba is a researcher, writer, and thinker moving across disciplinary and cultural boundaries. With a doctorate, he was trained in a rigorous academic environment, but my broader intellectual journey is fueled by an abiding interest in the human condition.

His research focuses on the oral traditions of the Kirat Limbu peoples—particularly the Tungdunge Mundhum—and their intersections with contemporary issues of the time, which include mental health, cultural identity, and social transformation. His work tries to create dialogue by bringing a more subtle and sustained observation of the world, something that has been overlooked, and by reframing it in light of modern frameworks so multiple frames for understandings of well-being and knowledge become possible.

As a writer, he is not only grappling with empirical research but also philosophical reflection, narrative, and cultural analysis. His work addresses scholarly and public audiences and aims to raise questions, prompt reflection, and contribute to conversations about justice, meaning, and human life.

A thinker is an identity that resonates with a lifelong inquiry and synthesis between disciplines of knowledge as well as rendering ideas that stir waters beyond just academic

stagnation in an ever-changing global context. He appreciates the importance of critical engagement, having ethical responsibility, and integrated understanding of pluralistic worldviews to face the intricacies of our reality.

His works on literature, music, and social science:

Anthologies of Poems (Books)

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